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DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES
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April 3, 2006

To: Mayor Michael D. Antonovich
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, Chair Pro Tem
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Yvonne Burke
Supervisor Don Knabe

From: David Sanders, Ph.D. *DS*
Director

**DECEMBER 6, 2005 BOARD AGENDA ITEM # 16 RE: MISSING CHILDREN
MONTHLY UPDATE**

On December 6, 2005, your Board directed the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to reconvene the "Missing Children Task Force" in order to continue in the identification and refinement of practices for the prevention and recovery of runaways; and to report back on a monthly basis with status updates on the following:

- I. Existing County-wide and community-specific services and programs, including the support that the DCFS Emergency Response Command Post can provide;
- II. Improved maintenance of the DCFS Missing Children Website;
- III. Enhancement of the DCFS Child Protection Hotline to provide specialized support for runaways;
- IV. Consideration of using the Permanency Partners Program (P-3), and;
- V. Addressing the issues that have been raised by youth who have been or are in care of the Department through corrections and modifications to the Department's policy.

UPDATES

- The second Runaway Task Force meeting was held on March 30, 2006. There were 46 members in attendance. Participants included community partners and stakeholders, emancipated and pre-emancipating youth, city and county law enforcement, probation, education, mental, medical health, Commission for Children

and Families and DCFS personnel. The agenda centered on departmental and both the Law Enforcement and Youth Concerns Sub-committee updates, including specific recommendations to be discussed, considered and potentially implemented. The recommendations will be outlined presently in this report.

- The Law Enforcement Sub-committee met prior to the March 30th Task Force meeting. They were able to inform the meeting agenda by forwarding several recommendations and topics for discussion. The information provided by them will be detailed shortly.
- The Youth Concerns Sub-committee also met prior to the second Task Force meeting. They, too, informed the agenda via recommendations and topics for discussion. Their input will also be outlined in greater detail presently.

CURRENT STATUS

I. Existing County-wide and community-specific services and programs, including the support that the DCFS Emergency Response Command Post can provide:

DCFS staff continues to work on the refinement of reporting runaway episodes in a timely and effective manner through its ARKs website. Currently, staff, through sub-committee planning are working on rolling out a training Department-wide. That training will consist of instruction on appropriately entering key information on runaways by designated regional office personnel. Further, the training will provide staff with updated procedures, which enhance the gathering and quantifying statistical information obtained on runaway episodes for further use. Finally, training will also include introduction of an updated minute order document, which consolidates information pertinent to runaway youth. That information is presently captured on three separate documents and the enhanced, consolidated document will support efforts to streamline existing reporting structures by reducing duplicative efforts.

II. Improved maintenance of the DCFS Missing Children Website:

DCFS has worked diligently since it's last report to the Board to improve maintenance of the Missing Children's website, better known as ARKs. To date, we have aggressively gathered data on runaway episodes that will further assist us in quantifying critical information. Additionally, the Law Enforcement Sub-committee committed to exploring several potential endeavors that would support maintenance of ARKs:

- Create a shared data base for DCFS and law enforcement use; and
- Identify a "go to" person/manager who has or is able to access information, statistics, etc., on runaway population within the Department.

(Please note attachment for current statistical information on DCFS runaway youth.)

(Please note attachment for current statistical information on DCFS runaway youth.)

III. Enhancement of the DCFS Child Protection Hotline to provide specialized support for runaways:

DCFS continues to train its key Hotline staff on the appropriate ways in which to interface with runaways. Runaway Adolescent Program (RAP) staff has participated in training vis-à-vis provision of relevant resource information. In addition, the law enforcement sub-committee submitted several ideas and concepts for on-going consideration and implementation into department practice. Items for consideration are as follows:

- Solicit involvement from as many law enforcement jurisdictions as possible;
- Create partnership between law enforcement and DCFS which handles runaway juveniles only;
- Denote accountability for runaway episodes via DCFS contracting process;
- Provide training for caregivers, potentially through the Kinship Division, on runaway behaviors; and
- Further define and refine existing Department and law enforcement policies concerning runaway procedural concerns.

The above-outlined strategies were discussed at the March 30th Task Force Meeting and the Law Enforcement Sub-committee made a commitment to explore and potentially implement several ideas. The Sub-committee will report back at the next Task Force Meeting.

IV. Consideration of using the Permanency Partners Program (P-3):

As outlined in the March 1st Board report, all runaways are now referred to P-3 staff. A follow-up report will be made to your Board upon any changes regarding this initiative.

V. Addressing the issues that have been raised by youth who have been or are in care of the Department through corrections and modifications to the Department's policy.

As stated earlier in the report, the Youth Concerns Sub-committee met and forwarded a number of recommendations to be discussed and sanctioned at the March 30th Task Force Meeting. The following proposals were submitted for additional consideration and consensus:

- Utilize the technical expertise contained in the I-TRACK system – software used for law enforcement tracking;
- Develop a questionnaire to capture information, including reasons given for runaway episodes;

- Reinstate regional office Youth clubs;
- Enhance the Department's Mentorship Division;
- Hire Emancipated youth; and
- Reinstate pre-placement policy.

The proposals above were subject to a great deal of discussion, including commitment by the Sub-committee to continue working toward implementation.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, DCFS remains committed to appropriately and adequately dealing with the complex issues and valid concerns that surround the runaway population. We will continue to employ departmental strategies and initiatives designed to further enhance permanency. We thank you for your committed attention to this significant matter. We will continue to report on current, on-going and subsequent efforts involving our runaway youth in future Board reports.

If you have any questions or need further assistance, please contact me, or your staff may contact Helen Berberian, Board Relations Manager at (213) 351-5530.

DS:AS:vm

Attachment

c: Chief Administrative Office
County Counsel
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors

Abducted & Runaway Foster Childrens System (ARKS)
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON RUNAWAY CHILDREN SERVICED BY DCFS
March 31, 2006

Category	Totals / Subtotal	Percent	Comments
Runaway DCFS Foster Children as reported in ARKS System	413		
Age			
0-9 years old	0	0%	
10-13 years old	22	5%	
14-17 years old	291	70%	Majority are teenagers 14-17
	313		
Gender			
Female	295	71%	More girls than boys runaway
Male	118	29%	
	413		
Ethnicity			
American Indian	5	1%	
Black	102	25%	
Asian/Pacific Islander	5	1%	
Hispanic/Latino	243	59%	
White	58	14%	
	413		
Placement Type			
Foster Home	191	46%	
Group Home	133	32%	
Relative/Guardian Home	83	20%	
(Not Indicated)	6	1%	
	413		
Location of CSW			
SPA 1 Lancaster	15	4%	
SPA 1 Palmdale	6	1%	
SPA 2 North Hollywood	25	6%	
SPA 2 Santa Clarita	14	3%	
SPA 3 Glendora	39	9%	
SPA 3 Pasadena	16	4%	
SPA 3 Pomona	17	4%	
SPA 4 Metro North	43	14%	
SPA 5 West Los Angeles	8	2%	
SPA 6 Century	24	8%	
SPA 6 Compton	26	6%	